

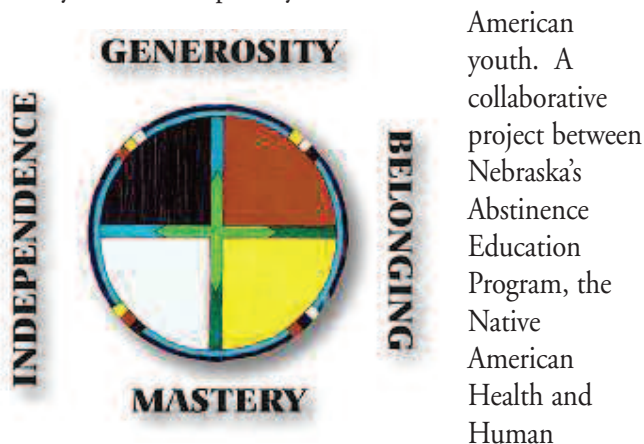
AbstinenceNews

NEBRASKA ABSTINENCE EDUCATION PROGRAM

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Healthy Futures Through Resiliency and Respect.

For many of today's teens, navigating life can be a challenge. Just finding one's place in the family, among peers and within the community can be a daunting task not to mention striving to maintain a healthy lifestyle. This is especially true for Nebraska's Native



Services Committee of the Panhandle Partnership, Nebraska Children and Families Foundation and the Chadron Native American Center is reaching these youth and building roads to greater acceptance and respect for Native youth in the Panhandle region.

The Chadron Native American Center's *Circle of Courage* initiative is the vehicle for this collaborative project and through which positive attitudes toward Native young people both in their Tribes and in the wider community is nurtured. The *Circle of Courage* initiative is also providing a framework for future and on-going abstinence and youth development programming.

The initiative seeks to build **resiliency** and **respect** for Native American youth through cultural teachings and activities.

Based on the traditions of the medicine wheel which is a Native American symbol for the wholeness of life, the *Circle of Courage* is based on four universal growth needs of all children:



Belonging: Attachment to caring adults in order to begin the process of learning and incorporate social values.



Independence: Fighting against feelings of powerlessness, some youth assert themselves in rebellious and aggressive ways. Young people need opportunities to develop skills and confidence to assert positive leadership and self discipline.



Mastery: Every youth has something they can do well and needs involvement in an environment with abundant opportunities for meaningful achievement.



Generosity: Without the opportunity to give to others, young people do not develop as caring persons.

It's life control!

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Healthy Futures Through Resiliency and Respect.

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The *Circle of Courage*ⁱ initiative for Native American youth living in the Panhandle region promotes healthy lifestyles based on abstinence from risk behaviors such as alcohol, drugs, and sexual activity as well as the healing of generational trauma. The following supportive activities are planned in the Chadron area:

Youth Summit – Success in Education, October 2006:

One day youth gathering for motivational talks and encouragement of academic commitment through cultural role models.

Community Training – October 2006: Facilitated by Dr. Dansie, hands-on training in developing skills for assessing and working with youth who have been traumatized.



Dr. Roberto Dansie

Sons and Daughters of Tradition Curriculum:

First used with over 100 youth in the Rushville schools the course is now open to Native American and non Native youth to promote cultural understanding. The success of the curriculum in Rushville has led to implementation in additional school settings.

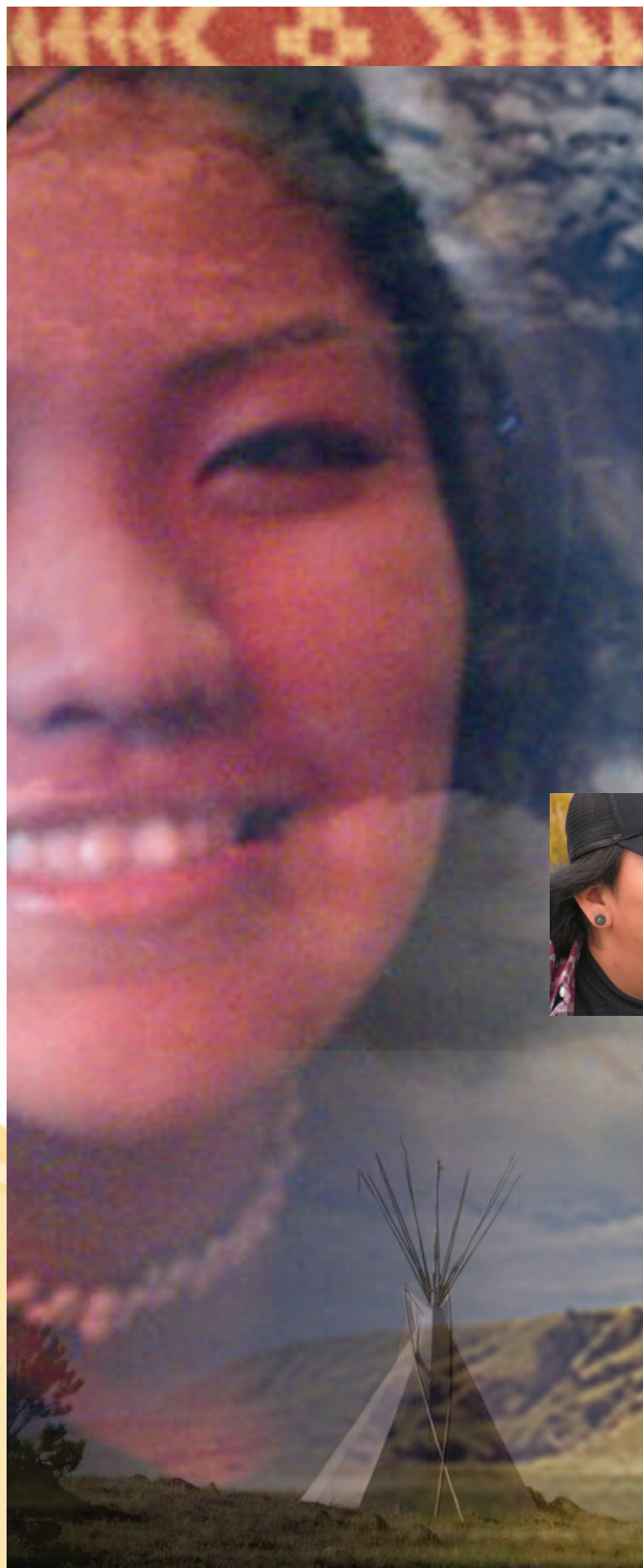
These activities recently occurred in the Chadron area:

Seventh Annual Intertribal Gathering – Ft. Robinson, June 2006:

Supported the development of resiliency for Native American youth. Created belonging to their community through participation in an event which requires healthy, dependency-free life style.

Understand and Healing Adolescent Trauma – Chadron, August 2006: Multi-cultural approaches to understanding and healing trauma among Native American youth. A two-day workshop presented by **Dr. Roberto Dansie**, clinical psychologist and authority of cultural diversity.

ⁱ The *Circle of Courage* model is outlined in *Reclaiming Youth at Risk: Our Hope for the Future*, by Larry K. Brendtro, Martin Brokenleg, and Steve Van Bockern (National Educational Service, Revised Edition, 2001).



The dedication of Chadron's Native American Center and the success of its programs through this collaboration is most encouraging and signals the healing relationships that are occurring. For more information on the *Circle of Courage* initiative contact Joe Simmons, Executive Director, Chadron Native American Center at 308-432-2174.





A Few Things to Keep in Mind.

BE CONFIDENT. Don't let fear, embarrassment or discomfort prevent you from talking with you kids about sex. This is about their health, not your comfort.

BE PROACTIVE. Talk to your kids early and often about sexual issues. It should be an ongoing process, not a one-time event. Look for natural teaching moments and use them to communicate your values and beliefs.

BE PREPARED. Get to know the facts about how STDs (sexually transmitted diseases) impact teens—both now and later in life. Be able to clearly articulate the serious physical and emotional risks of non-marital sexual activity.

BE RELEVANT. Look for natural, non-threatening opportunities to talk with your child about sex. Music, TV and movies provide logical springboards for conversation.

BE CLEAR. Don't assume anything. Emphasize your hope for your child's behavior, and spell out well defined boundaries for physical contact.

BE AWARE. Keep your eyes and ears open to what your child is learning at school. Be prepared to answer additional questions, and ask you child questions to clarify what was taught. Emphasize that you're always available to talk.

BE HONEST. Your own sexual history can be a powerful teaching tool. Encourage your kids to learn from your mistakes and share your regrets so they'll better appreciate the motivation of your message.

BE FUTURE-MINDED. For decades, high school seniors have continued to classify a good marriage and family life as "extremely important." Help your kids see how abstinence plays a key part in accomplishing this goal.

BE ENCOURAGING. Praise your kids regularly for the positive decisions they make. Let them know your goal is to help them fly higher, not hold them back longer.

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RESOURCES

Website Launched for Parents by the Federal Government

www.4parents.gov is a website for parents to help them help their teenage children avoid sexual activity. Created by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the website includes tips for starting conversations along with information parents need to help their teens make healthy choices.

Research shows that parents can have dramatic influence on their teenage children's decision about having or not having sex.

www.thecoolspot.gov is the young teen's place for information on alcohol and resisting peer pressure. This is a fun place for youth to learn factual information about alcohol as well as information about peer pressure; why and how it works, spoken peer pressure vs. unspoken peer pressure, peer pressure "bag of tricks" and the power of positive peer pressure. This site also has a wealth of helpful links that teens can access for further information on healthy bodies and healthy minds, help for youth living with substance abusing adults in their homes, alcohol and drug research and more.

Getting Family Discussions Started.

Many parents want to point their children down the straight and narrow when it comes to entertainment, but simply can't get things started. Perhaps the biggest obstacle you're facing right now is that your kids won't open up to you. Discussions have a way of turning into arguments. You may even feel like you're not on the same team. It may be a phase, or maybe there's so much hostility built up between you and your child that conducting a civil conversation seems an impossible task. Sensitivity to these key elements of interaction will help you build stronger relationships in the home:

■ **Be a good listener.** Many times, parents think they are listening when, to some extent, they're busy making assumptions or thinking about the response they're going to give. Make sure you hear your child out before coming to any conclusions. Put down the newspaper. Turn off the TV. Stay focused and be a fact collector. Ask questions before rendering an opinion. This requires a significant investment of time and energy. By the way, listening is not the same as agreeing. It is a demonstration of respect for another person's feelings and ideas, not an endorsement of them.

■ **Carry on a conversation, not an argument.** A conversation involves speaking, listening and thinking. An argument is mostly speaking (with the volume turned way up). If a conversation turns into an argument, end it. Separate. Agree to revisit the issue when you both cool down and feel you can return to a civil discussion of the facts. We need to set an example.

■ **Don't resort to sarcasm.** By definition, sarcasm is caustic. It can provoke hurt feelings, and words uttered in a "humorous moment" can continue to cause pain later. Parents who communicate by issuing a steady flow of sarcasm can expect casualties. There should be boundaries. Also, we tend to reap what we sow. When sarcasm comes back at us from our teens, we probably accuse them of being disrespectful. It never hurts to say what we mean and mean what we say, regardless of the topic being discussed.

■ **Don't use silence as a weapon.** Silence itself is a powerful form of communication. It's easy to think of silence as being neutral. But the absence of a positive message can sometimes be as damaging as the presence of a negative one. Children will always assign meaning to silence. Coupled with their own insecurities, it can suggest: "She's mad at me," "What did I do wrong?" or "He doesn't really care about me at all." If you must be silent, try to offer at least a few words of explanation—if only to put your children's mind ease. Some parents use silence to "send a message" to their kids. They punish with silence and withdraw affection in order to stir specific responses. It is very likely young people won't get the intended message, and even more likely that their response will compound the problem. We should be honest about our motives and resist the temptation to hide behind silence.

■ **Refuse to be patronizing.** If we "talk down" to our children (teenagers in particular), making them feel stupid or childish, they will resent it. Condescension often triggers defensiveness and anger. We should give them whatever credit we can for being mature and able to use common sense, because in most cases they tend to live up to – or down to – our expectations.

■ **Deal constructively with anger.** Usually, anger results from some combination of hurt feelings, disappointment or anxiety. Discuss the deeper issues. It may be an unmet need or an unfulfilled expectation. It often helps to find the "what if" phrases lurking in a teen's thinking ("What if I can't. . ." or "What if my friends think. . ."). Never attack one another's character. Anger can be verbally expressed with respect when it is aimed at specific behavior or the issue in question. Don't let anger serve as a smoke screen. Teens and adults often use anger to derail a conversation. It can be a diversionary tactic for turning attention away from one's own negative actions. Stay focused on the core issues.

■ **Choose battles carefully.** As your child moves through and out of the teen years, "rules" should be slowing giving way to "advice." Even with entertainment. This transition will usually be slower than the teen wants and faster than the parent wants. Still, it needs to take place. It may be time to rethink the old rules. Determine which battles are really worth fighting, and which issues are important enough to risk damaging the relationship. Some absolutes are worth that conflict, but they are few, and should be chosen carefully. Once you are confident about which rules to keep intact, clearly communicate your position on those key issues and don't waffle when challenged. All other areas are now open for negotiation in a whole new context.

Adapted from "What's Up With Today's Entertainment?: Raising Media-Wise Teens," A dare 2 Dig Deeper parents Series booklet by Bob Waliszewski and Bob Smithouser.

Your Kids Want to Hear About Sex...From You!

Set aside your opinions for a second to take in this truth: Research shows that teens want their parents to talk with them about sex.

We're not talking about a 4-hour speech on the birds and the bees. We're talking about a lifelong process that progressively builds to dialog about sex and health with respect to love, relationship and commitment.

Kids want to hear that sex is a positive thing when reserved within the context of marriage, and *you* should be the one to tell them.

Sound risky? It's not nearly as dangerous as leaving the job to somebody else. Be real with your kids and you can make a real difference in the sexual decisions they make.

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Community Corner.

North Central District Health Department (NCDHD) in O'Neill, NE was one of eight recipients awarded two year grant awards through Nebraska Health and Human Services System's Abstinence Education Program. Beginning in October, 2003 through September of 2005, NCDHD implemented numerous projects bringing the abstinence message to a greater number of youth and adults within the NCDHD service area. Though the official grant award to NCDHD has ended, abstinence programming continues through ongoing adult training and opportunities for youth.



Laura Buddenberg, Director of Administration and Outreach, Center for Adolescent and Family Spirituality, Girls and Boys Town.

A June 22nd workshop called *Unmasking Sexual Con Games*, a Girls and Boys Town curriculum that teaches the social skills necessary for healthy teen relationships was presented to over 30 social workers, mental health practitioners, counselors and youth workers in the O'Neill region. Laura Buddenberg, Director of Administration and Outreach at Girls and Boys Town provided workshop participants with valuable information on adolescent development, the affects

of media on teen thoughts and behaviors and how teens can be "conned" into unhealthy sexual behaviors. Attendees gave positive feedback on the usefulness of the workshop content. The next scheduled initiative is September 26, 27 and 28th when Shelly Donahue of *W.A.I.T. Training* (Why Am I Tempted) will be in O'Neill and the surrounding area to present to parents and teens.

Stephanie Bunner, Public Health Nurse with NCDHD and Director of O'Neill's Abstinence Program has done an accomplished job of keeping the abstinence message alive and current not only in the O'Neill area but statewide as well. As Editor of *Abstinence News*, Stephanie is sharing her knowledge and support for the abstinence message with Nebraska citizens throughout the state. Thanks Stephanie! Keep up the good work!

Abstinence News is published periodically by the Nebraska Abstinence Education Program and sponsored by the Nebraska Health and Human Services System

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